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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION WITH REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

PROVISIONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 1377th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 21 February 1991, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. TADESSE (Ethiopia)

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The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

OPENING OF THE SESSION BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I declare open the 1991 session of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: First I should like to express my appreciation to the Chairman, Ambassador Tesfaye Tadesse, and all the members of this Committee for the exemplary way in which they have carried out their mandate during the past year. May I also take this opportunity to welcome the representative of Papua New Guinea, Ambassador Lohia, the new member of this Committee.

The year 1990 was not only the thirtieth anniversary of the historic Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, but also the year when Namibia acceded to independence. In this context I wish to pay special tribute to the important contribution that this Committee has made both as an advocate for the rights of the Namibian people and in supporting the efforts that led to the independence of Namibia.

Furthermore, the Committee's recent activities connected with the observance of the thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration provide further proof of its determination to pursue its efforts until the remaining 18 Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories have achieved self-determination.

We must continue to count on the co-operation of the administering Powers in bringing the decolonization process to a successful conclusion. An intensified exchange of views with representatives of the Territories concerned will also be of the utmost importance.

(The Secretary-General)

I am confident that the administering Powers will continue to provide the United Nations with up-to-date information on each Territory in accordance with Article 73 e of the Charter. We encourage them to continue to invite United Nations visiting missions to the Territories so as to assess the wishes of their peoples and help in meeting their needs. Furthermore, the continued assistance of the administering Powers remains essential for the economic and social development of those Territories. The United Nations, together with its specialized agencies, will do its utmost to assist the Territories in striving for economic and social development.

With regard to the question of the Western Sahara, which is among the major concerns of this Committee, I wish to assure members of my continued efforts towards the implementation of the United Nations plan leading to a peaceful, fair and lasting solution to this long-standing problem. As I reported earlier, I am maintaining contact with the two parties on all aspects of the question. I am confident that, given their cooperation and political will, a solution is now within reach. I hope, therefore, that the parties will continue to accord particular attention to all issues regarding the implementation of the peace plan.

As members are aware, the General Assembly has recommended that the decolonization process be brought to a successful conclusion by the end of this century. I have no doubt that the Committee's work during the present session will bring us closer to the achievement of that objective. I wish the Committee every success in its deliberations.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The Secretary-General: I understand that members of the Committee are in agreement that the following representatives should be elected officers for the current year: Ambassador Tesfaye Tadesse of Ethiopia, as Chairman of the Committee; Ambassador Ricardo Alarcon de Quesada of Cuba, Mr. Sverre Bergh Johansen

(The Secretary-General)

of Norway and Mr. Alexander Slaby of Czechoslovakia, as the three Vice-Chairmen; and Mr. Mohammad Najdat Shaheed of the Syrian Arab Republic, as Rapporteur.

Accordingly, I declare those representatives elected unanimously to their respective posts.

I extend my warm congratulations to you, Mr. Chairman, and to the other members of the Bureau. I look forward to working closely with all of you in the coming months.

I now invite Ambassador Tadesse and Mr. Shaheed to take their places at the podium.

Mr. Tadesse (Ethiopia) took the Chair.

The CHAIRMAN: At the outset I wish, on behalf of the members of the Special Committee, to express our deep gratitude and appreciation to you, Mr. Secretary-General, for having convened the Committee's 1991 session. Your presence among us today not only signifies the importance that you personally attach to the work of the Committee but also indicates a renewed manifestation of your commitment and dedication to the cause of self-determination and independence for all those peoples under colonial rule.

I wish to welcome the representatives of Papua New Guinea, our newly elected member, which has emerged from its own colonial past to become one of the most active States of the Pacific region in the area of decolonization. The participation of Papua New Guinea affords the Committee yet another opportunity to benefit from the vast knowledge of a country located in the Pacific, where a number of Non-Self-Governing Territories are to be found. We look forward to its contribution, which will enrich our deliberations.

I should like to thank the members of the Special Committee for once again electing me to the chairmanship of the Committee. I regard my election for the fifth time to this important post as an expression of confidence in the unwavering

(The Chairman)

commitment of the Government and the people of Ethiopia to the struggle of colonial countries and peoples for freedom. I cannot help but feel deeply honoured that I am the person through whom this confidence has been expressed by all the delegations represented here. In discharging my duties as Chairman of this important Committee, I shall always be mindful of the confidence placed in me as well as of the honour paid to my country.

The 30 years that have elapsed since the adoption of the Declaration on decolonization have been years of tireless and unremitting efforts, often in the face of very great difficulties, to bring about the full and complete implementation of that Declaration. The results of these efforts are to be seen in the fact that, during this period, some 59 former Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories have emerged from dependent status and joined the membership of the United Nations. In very large measure, these results have been due to the unstinting endeavours of our Committee, to which the General Assembly has assigned the task of examining the application of the Declaration and making suggestions and recommendations regarding the progress and extent of its implementation. As the Secretary-General has just pointed out, this Committee, by its tireless efforts, has played a decisive role in keeping the situation in colonial Territories under continuous review and in bringing about in the United Nations a concerted approach to decolonization.

Since its inception, the Special Committee has not only discharged the task of reporting on the implementation of the Declaration but has suggested effective measures by which to achieve its goals. In its efforts to mobilize international support for and assistance to the dependent peoples, the Committee has maintained close cooperation with the specialized agencies and the various programmes of the United Nations system and has effectively enlisted the support of the non-governmental organizations concerned.

(The Chairman)

Further, by maintaining a close working relationship with the administering Powers, and with their continuing cooperation, the Committee has dispatched a large number of visiting missions to dependent Territories during this period. Such cooperation has greatly enhanced the effectiveness of the Committee's work.

The goal of decolonization, to which the Special Committee has devoted itself in the last 30 years, was greatly advanced and enhanced by the accession to independence of Namibia last year. However, I cannot help but recall that there are still 18 Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories on the Special Committee's list that have not yet exercised their right to self-determination and independence. These remaining Territories, for the most part small island Territories in the Pacific and Caribbean regions, now remain the central focus of the Special Committee's efforts to carry out the mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly.

As we are all aware, due to special circumstances, many of these small island Territories are facing different and highly complex problems which may further compound existing difficulties. During the year, the Committee will continue to examine these and other pressing problems extensively, both in the Sub-Committee and in plenary meetings. The Committee in its examination of these Territories will, I am sure, take into consideration the views expressed by the representatives of those Territories who participated in the regional seminars in Vanuatu and Barbados.

As Committee members may recall, the participants in the seminars emphasized the fact that the peoples of the small island Territories were entitled to determine their future in accordance with the United Nations Charter and General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), and on the basis of the options spelled out in General Assembly resolution 1541 (XV).

(The Chairman)

The Committee also hopes to send visiting missions to some of these Territories with the close cooperation of the administering Powers concerned. As has been amply demonstrated in the past, there is no substitute for the first-hand information which such visiting missions can obtain on the spot in ascertaining the views and wishes of the peoples in these Territories as regards their future status.

In the light of their solemn obligations under the Charter and the relevant decisions of the United Nations, it is the responsibility of the administering Powers concerned to ensure that these rights are fully respected at all times and that the aspirations of the peoples of the Territories for which they are responsible are fulfilled.

(The Chairman)

At the same time, it is incumbent upon the administering Powers to intensify programmes of political education for the peoples of the Territories under their administration so as to enhance those peoples' awareness of the purposes and objectives of the Charter of the United Nations and the Declaration with respect to the process of decolonization. The administering Powers concerned must also continue to strengthen the economies of those Territories by organizing systematic development programmes, enlisting to the maximum extent the assistance available from the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system as well as from the regional intergovernmental bodies concerned. Such programmes should carefully protect and safeguard the best interests, both present and future, of the peoples of those Territories. In this connection I shall continue to maintain close contact with the administering Powers concerned.

I am confident that with the active support of the Secretary-General and the full cooperation of all the members of the Committee we shall be able to address these and other complex issues on our agenda with renewed vigour and dedication and continue to contribute in no small measure to the process of decolonization, in the spirit of the United Nations International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism by the end of this century.

I should like once again to express our deep appreciation to the Secretary-General, who despite his extremely busy schedule has kindly opened the 1991 session of the Committee.

With the consent of members, I shall now suspend the meeting for 10 minutes while the Secretary-General is escorted from the Trusteeship Council Chamber.

The meeting was suspended at 11.15 a.m. and resumed at 11.25 a.m.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

The CHAIRMAN: Members have before them in document A/AC.109/L.1754 a note by the Secretary-General in which he draws the attention of members to the relevant resolutions and decisions on our work during 1991.

Members also have before them a note prepared by me, in document A/AC.109/L.1755, containing suggestions on the manner in which the Special Committee may wish to organize its work for the year.

As regards the suggestion contained in paragraph 1 of the latter note, it appears that members are in agreement that the Special Committee maintain its three subsidiary bodies as before. If I hear no objection, it will be so decided.

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: As regards the composition of these subsidiary bodies, I understand that the members of these bodies who served in 1990 are prepared to do so for the current year and that the delegation of Papua New Guinea has expressed the wish to serve on the Sub-Committee on Small Territories and the Sub-Committee on Petitions, Information and Assistance.

Accordingly, the membership of the subsidiary bodies is as follows: Working Group: the officers of the Committee and the Sub-Committees, the Congo, Fiji and the Islamic Republic of Iran; Sub-Committee on Petitions, Information and Assistance: Afghanistan, Bulgaria, the Congo, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Mali, Papua New Guinea, Sierra Leone, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and the United Republic of Tanzania; Sub-Committee on Small Territories: Afghanistan, Bulgaria, Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Ethiopia, Fiji, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Mali, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, the United Republic of Tanzania, Venezuela and Yugoslavia.

(The Chairman)

According to indications received in this regard I understand that members are in agreement that the following representatives should serve as officers of the Sub-Committees: Ambassador Renagi Renagi Lohia of Papua New Guinea as Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Petitions, Information and Assistance; Mr. Ghazi Jomaa of Tunisia as Chairman, and Mr. José E. Acosta-Fragachan of Venezuela as Rapporteur, of the Sub-Committee on Small Territories.

In the absence of any other indications I shall take it that the Committee so agrees.

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: I wish to extend my warm personal congratulations to Ambassador Lohia, Mr. Jomaa and Mr. Acosta-Fragachan on their election, and I look forward to working with them in close cooperation.

Paragraphs 2 and 3 of my note related to the suggested allocation of items and procedure for consideration. As will be noted, most of these suggestions are based on the Committee's long-established practice, which I believe will continue to facilitate the effective discharge of our task this year.

Mr. SRIWIDJAJA (Indonesia): My delegation would like to express its felicitations to you, Sir, on your re-election as Chairman of the Special Committee. We are convinced that under your experienced guidance the Committee will be able to bring its work to a successful conclusion. We also extend our congratulations to the other officers of the Committee.

I should like to congratulate and welcome the new member of the Committee, Papua New Guinea, whose representative has been elected Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Petitions, Information and Assistance. His country cooperates closely with Indonesia, and his country and mine have close relations. His contribution to the work of our Committee will strengthen the Committee's main mission regarding the matter of decolonization.

Having reviewed the agenda items, my delegation regrets the inclusion of the so-called question of East Timor. As on previous occasions, let me reiterate my Government's position. The people of East Timor have already exercised their right to self-determination; they did so 15 years ago. Their decision was taken in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV), 1541 (XV) and 2625 (XXV), thus terminating the colonial status of the former Portuguese Territory. It is also a matter of record that during the decolonization process the United Nations and its relevant bodies were kept apprised of the situation in the Province. In

(Mr. Sriwidjaja, Indonesia)

our view, East Timor has long ceased to be an issue of self-determination or decolonization.

Since integration my Government has assigned high priority to all spheres of development in the Province - political, economic, social, religious and cultural. Such endeavours have been greatly facilitated by the assistance rendered by several international organizations, including United Nations bodies, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other humanitarian agencies. Equally reflective of the undeniable, ongoing process is the explicit recognition by eminent persons, journalists and delegations from foreign and non-governmental organizations. In this regard, recently both an Australian parliamentary delegation and a representative of the World Council of Churches have paid visits to East Timor. Impressed with the development of the Province, they praised the Government for meeting the needs of the people in various aspects of life, including education, public health, religious life and transportation. The World Council of Churches representative also expressed surprise at the misleading reports of certain foreign media which had distorted factual accounts concerning the situation in East Timor without even having visited the place. These prevailing realities have convinced increasing numbers of countries of the irreversible, decolonized status of East Timor.

Having presented our point of view, we consider it pertinent to re-emphasize that any discussion of the political and constitutional status of East Timor is not only irrelevant but also unnecessary. It will constitute interference in matters essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of a Member State, in violation of the Charter. Therefore, my delegation strongly rejects the inclusion of the item on the Committee's agenda.

The CHAIRMAN: I assure the representative of Indonesia that the reservations he has expressed will be fully reflected in the verbatim record of this meeting.

I call on the representative of Portugal.

Mr. DA COSTA PEREIRA (Portugal): On behalf of the Portuguese delegation, I should like at the outset, Sir, to congratulate you on your re-election to the chairmanship of the Special Committee. I also extend our warmest congratulations to the other officers of the Committee.

Allow me to make some brief remarks on what the representative of Indonesia said about the question of East Timor. I start by recalling that the question under consideration contemplates a Non-Self-Governing Territory under Portuguese administration included on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories established under the authority of the General Assembly, to which Chapter XI of the Charter is still applicable. We cannot see how it can be suggested that East Timor has ceased to be an issue of decolonization or self-determination. The item is included on the agendas of both the General Assembly and the Special Committee. The Security Council has remained seized of the matter since December 1975. That means that the United Nations does not recognize that its process of decolonization has been completed.

No acts of free choice have ever been endorsed by the Organization. Therefore, the principle of respect for domestic jurisdiction cannot be invoked with regard to the question of East Timor. There is certainly no domestic question in need of an "internationally acceptable settlement", as mentioned in the Secretary-General's progress report (A/45/507) on the question.

The CHAIRMAN: If I hear no further comments, may I consider that members approve these suggestions, it being understood that appropriate modifications may be made as developments so warrant?

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: In accordance with the programme of meetings for the year approved by the General Assembly, I wish to remind members that the subsidiary bodies are scheduled to meet between March and June to complete consideration of the items allocated for their review and report. I wish to request the two Sub-Committees to make optimum use of the very limited time available to them in order to enable the Committee to submit its report to the Assembly within the prescribed time.

(The Chairman)

As indicated in paragraph 4 of document A/AC.109/L.1755, I intend to hold consultations with the various parties concerned as regards the order of priorities for consideration of plenary items, with a view to submitting appropriate recommendations at a later date.

As members are aware, this Committee annually reviews additional measures that might possibly be taken to curtail its documentation requirements. Bearing in mind the substantial progress made to date in this regard, I would ask members to continue to exercise their initiative in cooperating fully with the efforts of the Organization.

At this stage I would like to draw members' attention to paragraphs 6 to 8 of my note relating to the utilization of conference-servicing resources. As indicated in the note, at its forty-fifth session the General Assembly waived rules 67 and 108 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly in order to permit meetings to be declared open and debates to proceed without the presence of the quorum required under those rules. It is therefore my intention to convene the meetings of the Committee at the scheduled time to make the maximum use of the services available to the Committee. I am confident that I shall receive the full cooperation of all members in this regard.

In the same context I wish to request the presiding officers of the Sub-Committees to schedule meetings, as far as possible, only when a sufficient number of speakers will ensure full utilization of the time allotted and minimize the wastage in conference resources resulting from the cancellation of scheduled meetings. They are also requested to continue the practice of holding extensive consultations and informal meetings whenever possible, with a view to reducing the number of formal meetings to a minimum.

(The Chairman)

As regards the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, and as indicated in General Assembly decisions 44/429 and 45/410, the Assembly took note of the interim reports of the Secretary-General, contained in documents A/44/800 and A/45/624, on the International Decade and recommended that the Secretary-General request those States and organizations of the United Nations system which had not done so to reply not later than 1 April 1991 to his letters of 31 January 1989 and subsequent communications, and that the Secretary-General should invite them once again to submit suggestions so that they might be taken into account in the final report to be submitted to the Assembly at its forty-sixth session, which would enable the Assembly to consider and adopt an action plan aimed at ushering in, in the twenty-first century, a world free from colonialism.

In this connection I have been informed that the Secretary-General has transmitted the above-mentioned decision to all States and organizations of the United Nations system that have not replied to his communications. I hope that many Member States will respond and submit suggestions to be incorporated in the final report of the Secretary-General.

I now call on the representative of New Zealand.

Mr. O'BRIEN (New Zealand): Congratulations to you, Mr. Chairman, and to the members of the Committee of 24 on your elections to the Bureau for 1991, and congratulations too to our neighbour here, Papua New Guinea, on its election to the Special Committee.

Although we are not members of the Special Committee, New Zealand takes a close interest in the process of decolonization, both as an issue of general principle and because the process itself is, as you, Sir, pointed out in your opening remarks, particularly relevant to the Pacific Island region, where New Zealand is situated. We are pleased therefore by the attention given to contemporary decolonization problems by the Seminars organized under the auspices

(Mr. O'Brien, New Zealand)

of your Committee during the past year. The Committee's capacity to move with the times is exemplified by the recognition it has accorded the concerns of Non-Self-Governing Territories on issues such as environment, climate change, driftnet fishing and nuclear testing.

The New Zealand delegation takes particular note of the decision of the Committee that during 1991 the Sub-Committee will "examine the modalities of consolidating the various resolutions on the situation" in certain small Non-Self-Governing Territories. This work of streamlining and consolidating language on the texts of decolonization resolutions is important. It is part of the process of moving with the times. We offer our full cooperation to you, Sir, to your Bureau, and to the members of the Committee. New Zealand shares the same basic objective in all of this - that is, the furtherance of the interests of the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

I have referred to the decolonization Seminars organized by the Special Committee last year. With your permission, Sir, I should like on behalf of the Official Secretary of Tokelau, who as present at the Port Vila Seminar, to convey to you and the members of the Committee a communication received after the conclusion of your 1990 session.

The Official Secretary of Tokelau, Mr. Perez, has asked me to state that he is somewhat concerned that his views might not be fully and faithfully expressed in the report. Mr. Perez proposes therefore that, with the Committee's agreement, the record might be amended so that the paragraphs on Tokelau read as follows:

> "Mr. Casimilo Perez, Official Secretary of the Office of Tokelau Affairs, said that his country possessed special characteristics. The people of Tokelau asked for the opportunity to develop a form of government acceptable to both Tokelau and the United Nations in their own time and at their own pace. For the present they were happy to remain linked to New Zealand as a

(Mr. O'Brien, New Zealand)

Non-Self-Governing Territory. A change in that status was inevitable at some future point; indeed the devolution of political power to the people of Tokelau was already well under way. But a formal change of status was a major undertaking from which there was no turning back. To avoid making the wrong choice, Tokelau wanted time to explore all the options and to effect an outcome that would accord with the requirements of Tokelau.

"Tokelau required a strong economic base and the question of economic development was of high priority. The two largest donors to Tokelau were New Zealand and the United Nations Development Programme. He urged the Special Committee to foster flexibility on the part of international donor agencies so as to enable Tokelau to achieve maximum access to development funds."

The CHAIRMAN: The views expressed by the representative of New Zealand will be reflected in the verbatim record of this meeting.

Mr. ALARCON DE QUESADA (Cuba) (interpretation from Spanish): Mr. Chairman, at the outset I should like to express the pleasure of my delegation at seeing you again presiding over this Committee. Following your re-election, we express our conviction that under your leadership the Special Committee will continue to discharge the important responsibilities assigned to it by the General Assembly. We have known you for a number of years now; we have worked with you in other United Nations bodies. We therefore have full confidence in your skills, your sense of fairness and your ability to direct the work of this body.

We should also like to extend our congratulations to the other members of the Bureau, and we wish to thank the members of the Committee for supporting our election.

(Mr. Alarcon de Quesada, Cuba)

Our congratulations also go to the representative of Papua New Guinea, and we welcome him to this Committee. We are sure his delegation will make an important contribution to our work.

(Mr. Alarcon de Quesada, Cuba)

Although this is the Committee's inaugural meeting this year, it might be appropriate for us to express here and now a few, very general ideas about the Special Committee's work prospects. We listened to the Secretary-General's important statement and to his opening comments on our work. We are all well aware of the fact that the Special Committee has certain responsibilities the importance of which we cannot fail to emphasize. It should also be said that we are meeting in circumstances that should prompt deep thought regarding the manner in which we must carry out the mandate conferred upon us by the General Assembly.

In our opinion, the Special Committee, with the participation of all its members, should from the very outset of its work this year reflect on the difficulties and obstacles it has encountered ever since its creation by the General Assembly, some of which are of more recent date - and this with a view to considering the views of all the members of the Committee on ways to improve the Committee's effectiveness so as to be in a better position to carry out its mandate from the General Assembly.

Many of these problems have been with us over the years and are well known to all. The lack of cooperation on the part of certain administering Powers with the Committee and the Trusteeship Council are problems that we have had ever since the Committee was established. Certain administering Powers have failed to submit information under Article 73 e of the Charter; such a lack of information has had to be reflected in the documents prepared for us by the Secretariat, which are not always up to date nor always an accurate picture of the situation in the Territories.

Although we have now entered the final decade of the century, we still do not have a plan of action for the total eradication of colonialism, and there are even significant shortcomings in the public information system of the United Nations. One need only go to the third floor of this building, where there is a map prepared

(Mr. Alarcon de Quesada, Cuba)

by the Secretariat graphically describing the situation in the world's remaining dependent Territories. Anyone who looks at this map can see that there is a Territory that has been the subject of lengthy deliberations in this Chamber for many years: Puerto Rico appears on the map in a colour suggesting that it is an independent Territory. But not even the administering Power would believe that, nor would that Territory's Governor or people. Those of us who have considered the situation there year in and year out cannot believe it either.

There are other matters that could be raised to demonstrate the necessity for all the members of the Committee to consider thoroughly, openly and democratically the ways, means and procedures that would enable us to discharge the obligation conferred upon us by the General Assembly. I need not repeat that our obligation is to ensure the implementation of the Declaration calling for the elimination of colonialism in all its forms and manifestations. The idea is not to resort to tricks to extend colonialism or to mask it, but to see to the implementation of the Declaration which three decades ago called for its complete elimination in all its forms and manifestations.

Before our Sub-Committees begin their work, we believe that it would be useful and appropriate for them to receive guidelines only the Committee itself can provide. That is why I should like to suggest that, from the very outset of our work this year, the Committee in plenary should consider all the ideas, concerns and suggestions that any member may have with a view to ensuring greater effectiveness in our activities.

Once again, Mr. Chairman, I wish to extend to you our congratulations on your re-election, and I thank all the members of the Committee for having given me this opportunity to make a statement.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank the representative of Cuba for his congratulatory words. I look forward to his customary, very useful cooperation and assistance in discharging our joint responsibility in the Bureau.

Mr. BERGH JOHANSEN (Norway): It gives me great pleasure, on behalf of the Norwegian delegation, to congratulate you, Sir, on your re-election as Chairman of the Special Committee. I am convinced that your competence and skill will be of crucial importance to the Committee in its efforts to make further progress towards decolonization.

I should also like to extend to the other Vice-Chairmen and the Rapporteur the congratulations of my delegation. I can assure them of the fullest cooperation of my delegation towards our common goal. Furthermore, I should like to express my gratitude to the other members of the Committee for re-electing me as one of the Vice-Chairmen. I look forward to working again with them all in our common endeavour.

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome Papua New Guinea, the newly elected member of the Special Committee. We look forward to working together with Papua New Guinea.

After the transition to independence of Namibia, I think it is fair to say that the decolonization process is one of the most successful achievements in the history of the United Nations. These achievements are first of all due to the efforts of the colonial peoples themselves, often in constructive cooperation with the administering Powers. In addition, the United Nations, including the Special Committee, together with other subsidiary organs of the General Assembly, has played a significant role as an agent for positive change.

Although the process of decolonization has entered its final stage, difficult and important questions are still before the Committee. The remaining small

(Mr. Bergh Johansen, Norway)

Territories demand from the Committee an imaginative approach in accordance with the principles embodied in the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, and with the individual circumstances prevailing in each case. The small Territories still deserve our full attention. Most of these Territories are still extremely vulnerable, particularly because of their limited resources to meet the economic, climatic and cultural challenges they are facing.

(Mr. Bergh Johansen, Norway)

As my delegation has stressed on earlier occasions, it is important for this Committee to adapt to changes in the international political climate and to progress achieved. I should like to express the hope that our Committee will be able to make further progress towards the full implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. That can be achieved only if a truly realistic approach is adopted. Particular emphasis in that respect should be placed on the spirit of consensus, which has played such a positive role in former deliberations of the Committee. This requires close cooperation and a willingness to compromise on the part of all.

With a view to achieving our common objectives, this year's session calls for an enhancement of the effectiveness of the Special Committee in order to promote progress towards the full exercise of the right to self-determination in all Non-Self-Governing Territories. The Committee should therefore continue to examine, with an open mind, possible ways and means to rationalize the work of the Committee.

As usual, my delegation looks forward to continued cooperation with the administering Powers.

In conclusion, I should like to reiterate the commitment of my delegation to full cooperation with the other members of the Committee in our joint efforts towards decolonization.

The CHAIRMAN: I note that the delegation of Norway has indeed made a significant contribution to one of our Sub-Committees, as Rapporteur, and that it will continue to do the same as a Vice-Chairman of the Committee. I look forward to cooperating with him in all aspects of our work.

Mr. LOHIA (Papua New Guinea): At the outset I take this opportunity on behalf of the Government of Papua New Guinea to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, and the other Committee officers on your unanimous election to your important posts.

(Mr. Lohia, Papua New Guinea)

We look forward to working closely with you to meet the expectations of the international community as expressed through the General Assembly.

Through you, Sir, I also thank the President and the members of the General Assembly for having taken the decision that made it possible for Papua New Guinea to serve on this Committee. I am grateful to you, Sir, and the other members of the Committee; your process of consultations helped bring about this event, an important and happy one for Papua New Guinea.

We also thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your important statement at this inaugural meeting; through you, we thank the Secretary-General for the important statement he made.

As members know, my delegation and the Government of Papua New Guinea will work closely with the Committee in its deliberations on the remaining Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories under the auspices of the United Nations.

Papua New Guinea is not new to the Trusteeship Council Chamber. Prior to our independence, the founding father and first Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, Sir Michael Somare, visited New York to address this Committee, the Fourth Committee and the General Assembly on the importance of the liberation of our people. I take this opportunity to thank all the leaders of the developing countries, especially African countries - leaders such as Nkruma, Nyerere and others - who helped Sir Michael and others further the process of decolonization in our country.

To serve on the Committee as a full member is a great honour for my Government and my people. Our Foreign Minister - who, as Prime Minister, was the founding father of Papua New Guinea - has requested me to thank the Committee and the General Assembly for making this possible.

During its 46 years of existence, no history has recognized the United Nations as the the centre of the world. I think the present period is a very important one

(Mr. Lohia, Papua New Guinea)

during which the international community can take its rightful place at the centre of international development in the interests of peace, security and prosperity for all our peoples.

My delegation is listening closely to suggestions concerning reforms in the United Nations and is working hard on that subject. This includes reforms in the work of the Fourth Committee and this Committee. I assure members that my delegation will always be ready to assist.

In 1985 my Government agreed to host one of the Committee's original seminars in Papua New Guinea. That was an indication of the commitment of the people and the Government to the work of the Committee and the United Nations in decolonization, and in particular to steering the cause of liberation of the oppressed and suppressed peoples of the world, wherever they may be.

Even when countries become independent, there remains much to do, as we have witnessed with the independence of Namibia, in terms of reaching out and assisting them to become economically and socially independent. We have all experienced this, and Papua New Guinea is here with that experience to assist with the process of decolonization not only of the Territories on the list, but also recognizing that there are other territories and peoples in the world still living under colonialism. The fight against apartheid in South Africa is something with which we associate ourselves very closely, and we shall continue to look at it in relation to the work of this Committee. We shall help ensure that we work towards meeting the objective set for us by the General Assembly: to eradicate colonialism by the end of this decade. I hope those higher aspirations can be achieved. My delegation and I stand ready to participate and assist in that process.

My special thanks go to the Committee for electing me - and Papua New Guinea - as Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Petitions, Information and Assistance.

(Mr. Lohia, Papua New Guinea)

I have some preliminary ideas about the organization of the work of the Committee and its Sub-Committees. During the course of our work this year, I intend to work closely with the Chairman and other members of the Committee in effective organization so that the work of the Fourth Committee can be in harmony with the work of this Committee.

Once again, I thank the Committee for this honour.

The CHAIRMAN: I reiterate my welcome of the Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea to membership of the Committee. We look forward to working with him closely as a member of the Committee and as Chairman of his Sub-Committee.

Mr. JOMAA (Tunisia)(interpretation from French): Allow me to extend to you, Mr. Chairman, my delegation's best wishes for success and to congratulate you on your re-election as Chairman of the Special Committee. I should also like to congratulate the other officers of the Special Committee and to assure them of our total cooperation in seeing to it that the work before us will be carried out successfully. I should also like to welcome the new member of the Special Committee, Papua New Guinea, and congratulate its representative who has just been named Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Petitions, Information and Assistance, and also to congratulate the representative of Venezuela, who has been named Rapporteur of the Sub-Committee on Small Territories.

I should like to express my delegation's deep gratitude to the entire Special Committee for the honour and trust placed in me by re-electing me to the chairmanship of the Sub-Committee on Small Territories. We feel that this is a tribute to my country, Tunisia. I shall always be ready, as Chairman of that Sub-Committee, to help the Special Committee fully and effectively to fulfil the mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly.

The CHAIRMAN: I should like once again to congratulate the representative of Tunisia on his re-election as Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Small Territories.

Mr. SLABY (Czechoslovakia): I should like to avail myself of this opportunity to express, on behalf of the delegation of Czechoslovakia, my congratulations to you, Mr. Chairman, on your re-election, as well as to the other officers of the Special Committee who have been re-elected or newly elected to their posts. It is also a great pleasure for me to welcome Papua New Guinea among us.

It is a great honour and privilege for me to convey thanks for the confidence expressed in my country, Czechoslovakia, and in me by my election to the post of

(Mr. Slaby, Czechoslovakia)

Vice-Chairman of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. We take it as an expression of the fact that members of the Special Committee realize that Czechoslovakia has a record of long-standing commitment in the solution of the questions of decolonization and as an appreciation of my country's contribution to principled positions in the struggle against colonialism in all its forms and manifestations. We also take it as a reflection of the fact that our work here, which this year involves the post of Vice-Chairman of the Special Committee of 24, has also entailed our chairmanship of the Sub-Committee on Petitions, Information and Assistance last year, has been, notwithstanding the reservations of several members, evaluated positively by the majority of members of the Special Committee of 24. We shall take that into account during our future work in the Special Committee.

My delegation expressed itself several times in the past year to the effect that it considered the work of United Nations bodies in the field of decolonization to be unsatisfactory. Our reasons and arguments were communicated to the Special Committee and the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session, not only by my delegation, but by the delegations of most countries that expressed their views in the general debate on decolonization matters at that session of the General Assembly. Their voices were strong enough to make one of the most competent of men, Ambassador Martin Adouki, Chairman of the Fourth Committee at the forty-fifth session, reconsider what we in Czechoslovakia refer to in similar situations as the "bear service" - by which we mean disservice - rendered the process of decolonization by the present style of work that prevails in United Nations bodies dealing with decolonization. We fully support his initiative.

(Mr. Slaby, Czechoslovakia)

It is fully understandable, given the situation in the Special Committee of 24, that some delegations that have reservations regarding our work are not very enthusiastic about affixing their signatures to materials that the Special Committee and its Sub-Committees - specifically, from Czechoslovakia's viewpoint, the Sub-Committee on Petitions, Information and Assistance - produce or, if I may say so, do not produce but merely take over from previous years. That may well be the main reason why, beginning today, it will no longer be possible to find the name of a Czechoslovak representative on reports submitted by the Sub-Committee on Petitions, Information and Assistance to plenary meetings of the Special Committee of 24, as was the case for many years in the past.

Nevertheless, I should like to assure you, Mr. Chairman, that in discharging our duties as a State member of the Special Committee of 24 and of both its Sub-Committees, and in discharging my duties as Vice-Chairman and officer of the Special Committee, I shall do my utmost to help the Special Committee to meet its mandate fully, if possible in a more effective way than hitherto.

In conclusion, as former Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Petitions, Information and Assistance, I should like to thank the Secretariat members and the majority of the members of the Sub-Committee for the assistance given me in the implementation of my tasks. I regard it as my privilege to have worked with the Secretariat staff, who have worked for long years in the field of decolonization with great devotion and competence.

The CHAIRMAN: I should like once again to note the Special Committee's appreciation to the delegation of Czechoslovakia for having served for many years as Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Petitions, Information and Assistance and for its contribution to the decolonization process. We look forward to the constructive contribution of the delegation of Czechoslovakia as a Vice-Chairman of the Special Committee.

Mr. ADOUKI (Congo) (interpretation from French): Allow me to join those who have personally congratulated you, Mr. Chairman, and the other officers of the Special Committee, on your re-elections to guide our deliberations. I should also like to thank members of the Special Committee for having re-elected the Congo as a member of the Sub-Committee on Petitions, Information and Assistance, as well as to the Sub-Committee on Small Territories.

I should also like to welcome the friendly delegation of Papua New Guinea, which has joined us as a member of the Special Committee, and, in particular, my friend and colleague, Ambassador Lohia, whose contribution to the work of the Fourth Committee is familiar to all of us.

Your re-election, Mr. Chairman, symbolizes continuity. I hope that it will also augur well for the positive outcome of our current session.

(Mr. Adouki, Congo)

We are aware that our methods of discussion need to be improved at a time of profound change within the system of international relations, and recent experience has taught us the need always to reach consensus decisions, which can only further strengthen the scope and impact of our decisions. I am pleased to note that the majority of the resolutions of the Special Committee that served last year as the basis for the recommendations of the Fourth Committee to the General Assembly were adopted by consensus.

I am convinced that our Committee should continue to play a role in the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. As Chairman of the Fourth Committee, I have suggested that during the consideration of agenda item 18 by the General Assembly an informal, ad hoc working group be set up to look into ways and means of further broadening the consensus in this area.

Without wishing to begin a debate on the issue, for this is neither the time nor the place, I wish to say that I welcome all the ideas along those lines advanced this morning by various representatives, and I wish to inform members of the progress achieved since my colleagues on the Bureau of the Fourth Committee and I took the initiative in the General Assembly of preparing an unofficial document on the question, a document that we have entitled "Comments concerning the work of the Fourth Committee". We distributed it not only to the officers of this Committee but also to the Chairmen of the regional Groups for the month of December, 1990, and the administering Powers, whose cooperation is vital for the full success of our work. Since then a number of delegations have made known - sometimes in a pressing manner - their interest in the suggested working group, which we wish to be broadly representative. It is encouraging that the number of delegations interested in the working group continues to grow.

(Mr. Adouki, Congo)

As a member of this Committee, I naturally intend to keep it regularly informed of progress on the proposal, so that I may receive members' advice and suggestions.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank the Permanent Representative of the Congo for briefing us on developments related to his efforts. I assure him that the members of the Committee will be ready to consider his proposals as appropriate.

I now call on the representative of Indonesia, who wishes to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. SRIWIDJAJA (Indonesia): My delegation has asked to speak in exercise of its right of reply to the statement made by the representative of Portugal, who referred to the so-called question of East Timor. It is clear that the substance of his allegations was merely intended to keep alive a non-existent issue for the benefit of a few discontented voices. Such misrepresentations do not add anything to the quality of the debate in the Committee.

The statement of Portugal demonstrates once again its determination to mislead the international community in relation to the relevant facts concerning the right to self-determination of the people of East Timor, already exercised in 1976, and the human rights situation in the Province. This intensified campaign against Indonesia, in the midst of the Secretary-General's efforts to seek a solution, will only create obstacles to the process and undermine the credibility and sincerity of the Portuguese Government. In order to facilitate the task of the Secretary-General by creating an atmosphere conducive to a settlement, Indonesia on its part has shown seriousness to cooperate with the Secretary-General in order to make possible the visit of a Portuguese parliamentary delegation to East Timor. My delegation earnestly believes that if such a visit is conducted with open-mindedness and good will this will enable Portugal to understand and appreciate the decision of the East Timorese people to integrate with Indonesia.

(Mr. Sriwidjaja, Indonesia)

In considering the real interests of the Province as a whole, my delegation is constrained to set the record straight. We have no intention of indulging in a lengthy exposé of facts concerning the exercise of self-determination by the East Timorese people. Let the historical record speak for itself: the people of East Timor have already exercised their right to self-determination in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) and 1541 (XV). The entire process of decolonization culminated in the formal promulgation into law of the statute of integration by the President of Indonesia on 17 July 1976. It has become clear to an increasing number of Member States and the international community as a whole that Indonesia's role as regards its twenty-seventh Province has been one of contributing towards the accelerated development of East Timor in all spheres of life - political, economic and social - as well as in the protection of cultural and religious rights.

In my delegation's view, therefore, East Timor has long ceased to be an issue of self-determination or decolonisation.

In his statement the representative of Portugal has tried to keep alive in this Committee the so-called question of East Timor by repeating statements made in previous years.

Once again, I should like to reiterate that my Government rejects discussion of this matter in this body.

The CHAIRMAN: I now call on the representative of Portugal.

Mr. DA COSTA PEREIRA (Portugal): It is not my delegation's intention to prolong the debate on this issue at this time. But I have a brief remark concerning what has just been said by the representative of Indonesia in exercise of the right of reply which we consider to be a distortion of the historical facts.

By invading and illegally occupying the Non-Self-Governing Territory of East Timor under Portuguese administration on 7 December 1975, Indonesia prevented the

(Mr. Da Costa Pereira, Portugal)

achievement of the decolonization process Portugal had started following the revolution of 25 April 1974 in Lisbon. Thus, Indonesia claims that the population of the Territory has already exercised its right to self-determination, opting for integration with Indonesia in 1976. That was never recognized by the United Nations.

Finally, I should like to point out that Portugal has no claim whatsoever to sovereignty over Territory but that it is constitutionally committed to the safeguarding of the right to self-determination. The upholding of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the East Timorese people as well as of its specific identity is also a legal, moral and historical responsibility incumbent upon the Portuguese authorities as the administering Power.

Recent events we are following today with the greatest concern show clearly how the international community and the United Nations condemn the military invasion and annexation of Kuwait. The international community cannot accept, I believe, a double standard from the United Nations when considering the military invasion and annexation of East Timor by Indonesia.

As members know, under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary-General talks are proceeding between Portugal and Indonesia concerning the question of East Timor. These mediation efforts, tirelessly and patiently exercised by the Secretary-General aimed at reaching a comprehensive settlement of the question, as provided for by General Assembly resolution 37/30, have our firm support.

The CHAIRMAN: I call on the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. SRIWIDJAJA (Indonesia): It was not my intention to make another statement had a non-member of the Special Committee not interfered in the Special Committee's internal matters. Allow me, therefore, once again to reply to the statement by the representative of Portugal, just to set the record straight and in order that that statement not confuse members of the Special Committee.

(Mr. Sriwidjaja, Indonesia)

As members may recall, the last time a resolution on the so-called question of East Timor was presented to and voted upon by the General Assembly was in 1982. That resolution, initiated by Portugal and its erstwhile colonies in Africa, was adopted by a slim margin of only two votes, since only 50 Member States voted in favour of the resolution, with 48 Member States voting against it, 50 abstaining and 11 absent.

The result of the 1982 vote on the East Timor resolution actually reflected a clear trend in voting patterns on the question discernible since 1975, the first time the issue was brought before the General Assembly. At that time, owing to the confused situation and the malicious misrepresentations that were spread by Indonesia's detractors, the General Assembly adopted a resolution critical of Indonesia's policy by a vote of 72 in favour, 10 against and 43 abstentions, thus by a margin of support of 62 votes.

By the next year, 1976, a similar resolution passed by a much-reduced margin. That margin continued to decrease with every subsequent year owing to growing understanding by the world community of what really transpired in East Timor, and, consequently, to greater support of the Indonesian position. In 1980 the resolution on East Timor passed by a vote of only 58 in favour, 35 against, and 46 abstentions. In 1981, the margin of support was further reduced to 12, when the votes were recorded at 54 in favour, 42 against and 46 abstentions.

The message which this trend in voting patterns conveyed, and especially the 1982 voting result, was of course not lost on the international community, including Portugal and its supporters. The votes clearly showed an increasing convergence of support for what Indonesia has since the outset maintained, namely, first, that Indonesia from the outset supported the efforts of the new Government of Portugal to decolonize East Timor and time and again reaffirmed its readiness to cooperate with Portugal in the peaceful and orderly implementation of the process

(Mr. Sriwidjaja, Indonesia)

of decolonization on the basis of Portugal's own plan, subsequently promulgated as Constitutional Law 7/75; secondly, that by precipitately and irresponsibly abandoning the Territory of East Timor at the height of the civil war it had itself instigated, thus completely mishandling the decolonization process, Portugal has in fact forfeited any right, whether legal or moral, to be still considered the administering Power; thirdly, that in face of that the East Timorese people had rightly assumed their inherent right to decolonize themselves, which they did by choosing independence through integration with Indonesia in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and Principles VI, VIII and IX of resolution 1541 (XV), and as further confirmed by the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolution 2625 (XXV); fourthly, that Indonesia's role is helping to ensure that the democratically expressed will of the majority of the people not be overruled by the armed terror and unilateral imposition of a ruthless minority; and, lastly, that the raising of the so-called question of East Timor in the United Nations constituted a contravention of Article 2, paragraph 7, of the United Nations Charter.

COOPERATION WITH UNITED NATIONS BODIES

COOPERATION WITH INTERGOVERNMENTAL BODIES

The CHAIRMAN: I wish only to add that as regards invitations extended to the Committee I suggest that the Committee authorize me, as is the practice, to hold consultations as appropriate concerning its participation or otherwise at the meetings concerned, as well as the level of representation when accepting invitations.

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: The next meeting of the Committee will be announced in the Journal.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.